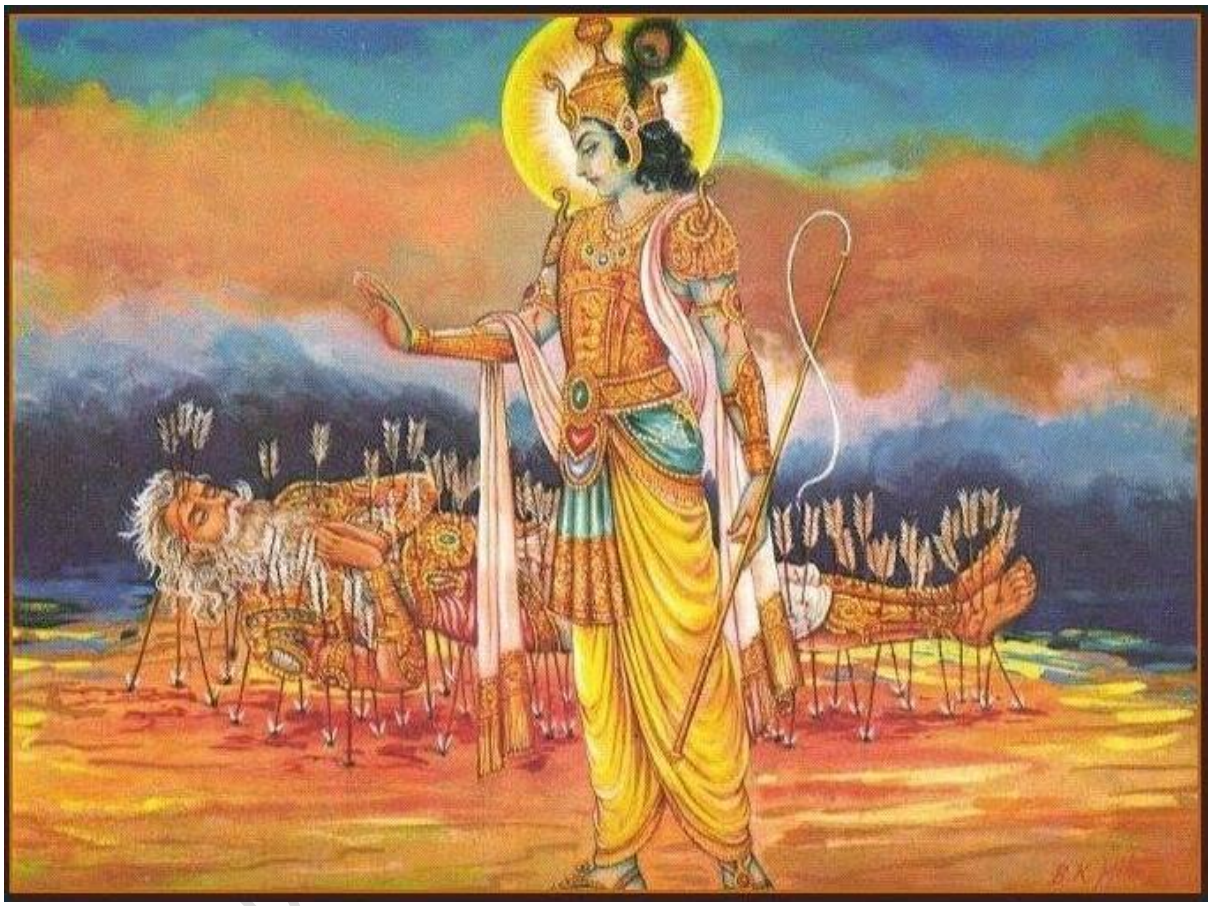
BHEESHMA-ASHTAMI

(Maagha Sukla Ashtami)



Bheeshmaastami is associated with Bheeshma Pitamaha, one of the most respected and grandiose character of the epic Mahabharata. It was on this day Bheeshma breathed his last and this day is commemorated as the day of his Niryaana.

Bheeshmaastami occurs on 8th day (Ashtami) of the bright fortnight (Sukla Paksha) in Magha Masam as per Hindu Lunar Calendar that usually falls during the months of January–February, a day after the Sun-centric festival Ratha Sapthami.

Generally, it is impossible for human beings to know the exact time of birth and death, but in Bheeshma's case he could set time for his soul to depart.

- How could this happen?
- Who was Bheeshma in his previous birth?
- What was his lineage?
- Why should we pay our obeisance and salutations to him on this day?

Bheeshma originally named as Devavratha was one of the Ashta Vasus (Demi Gods) called by name Dyau or Prabhas (as per some texts), who took birth on this Earth due to a curse given by the sage Vasishta.

He was born as the eighth son of Kuru King Shantanu (s/o of Pratipa) of the Lunar Dynasty and Ganga Devi (Holy River Goddess Ganga). Shantanu was Varuna Avathara.

Later he came to be known popularly as Bheeshma when he made a ferocious pledge (Bheeshma Pratighna) to be a bachelor for life to facilitate his father Shantanu to marry Sathyavathi.

He was also known by the other names such as... Ganga Putra, Gaangeya, and Bheeshmaachaarya. He was a disciple of Lord Parashurama.

Why did Bheeshma choose this day for his Niryaana?

When Bheeshma made a solemn pledge and stood by that, his father Shantanu was very much pleased and in gratitude of his son's sacrifice he gave him a boon that he (Bheeshma) would die when he (Bheeshma) wishes - Ichcha Marana (at one's own will/choice).

Though Bheeshmaachaarya fell down in the war on the 10th day after the commencement of the great Kurukshetra war; he eagerly and patiently waited for 58 days on the bed of arrows before departing from this world (p. 2). He waited for the onset of Uttarayana; the most auspicious period for a soul to depart.

Even after the onset of Uttarayana he waited for the day of Ratha Sapthami the day on which Sun's movement takes a definite effect northward and on the next day Bheeshma invoked his father's boon and died.

Bheeshma's death is said to have occurred during the constellation of Rohini Nakshathra, on the 68th day of the Kurukshetra war, which was the Sukla Paksha Ashtami tithi in the lunar month of Maagha masam.

Famous Sri Vishnu Sahasra Nama Sthothram in praise of Lord Vishnu was made known, not only to Pandavas but to the entire world by Bheeshma in the presence of Lord Sri Krishna during his (Bheeshma's) avasana dasa.

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But for Bheeshma, we would have missed the most sacred Stothra of Lord Vishnu. Perhaps for this great deed alone, Bheeshma deserves to be remembered on this scared day of his Niryana and it is befitting to offer our obeisance and salutations to this noble soul.

Bheeshmaachaarya re-established Hari Sarvottamatva. Though his end was very painful having fallen on the bed of arrows, Bheeshma had a very noble and sacred death in the presence of none other than Lord Sri Krishna Himself. What else! one needs at the time of death other than this to attain salvation! in the divine presence of the Supreme God.

Bheeshma Ekadasi Vs Bheeshma Niryaana

Ekaadasi thithi succeeding Bheeshma Niryaana (Bheeshmaashtami) is named after Bheeshmaachaarya as a mark of respect to the noble soul, and is called Bheeshma Ekadasi.

Some section of the society treats this day as the day of Bheeshma Niryana. But, actually Bheeshma niryana did not take place on this day of Ekaadasi. It was on the day of Ashtami thithi the day succeeding Ratha Sapthami that Bheeshma Niryana took place.

Hence, Bheeshma Ekaadasi and Bheeshma Niryana are not interrelated.

What is to be done on this day?

- Bheeshma Tharpana & Arghya...

Tarpana Manthra

वैयाघ्रपादगोत्राय साकांृत्यप्रवराय च ।

गांगापुत्राय भीष्माय आजन्मब्रह्मचाररणे।

अपुत्राय जलां ददयाां नमो भीष्माय वममणे।

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भीष्मः शांतनवो वीरः सत्यवादी जजतेंद्रियः ।

आभीरदभभरवाप्नोत्तु पुत्रपौत्रोचचतााां क्रियाम्।

ವೈಯಾಘ್ರಪಾದಗೋತ್ರಾಯ ಸಾಂಕೃತ್ಯಪ್ರವರಾಯ ಚ |

ಗಂಗಾಪುತ್ರಾಯ ಭೀಷ್ಮಾಯ ಆಜನ್ಮಬ್ರಹ್ಮಚಾರಿಣೇ |

ಅಪುತ್ರಾಯ ಜಲಂ ದದ್ಯಾಂ ನಮೋ ಭೀಷ್ಮಾಯ ವರ್ಮಣೆ |

ಭೀಷ್ಮಃ ಶಾಂತನವೋ ವೀರಃ ಸತ್ಯವಾದೀ ಜಿತೇಂದ್ರಿಯಃ |

ಆಭೀರದ್ಭಿರವಾಪ್ನೋತು ಪುತ್ರಪೌತ್ರೋಚಿತಾಂ ಕ್ರಿಯಾಮ್ |

వైయాఘ్రపాదగోత్రాయ సాంకృత్యప్రవరాయ చ |

గంగాపుత్రాయ భీష్మాయ ఆజన్మబ్రహ్మచారిణే |

అపుత్రాయ జలం దద్యాం నమో భీష్మాయ వర్మణే |

భీష్మః శాంతనవో వీరః సత్యవాదీ జితేంద్రియః |

ఆభీరద్భిరవాప్నోతు పుత్రపౌత్రోచితాం క్రియామ్ |

വൈയാഘ്രപാദഗോത്രായ സാംകൃത്യപ്രവരായ ച |

ഗംഗാപുത്രായ ഭീഷ്മായ ആജന്മബ്രഹ്മചാരിണേ |

അപുത്രായ ജലം ദദ്യാം നമോ ഭീഷ്മായ വർമണേ |

ഭീഷ്മഃ ശാംതനവോ വീരഃ സത്യവാദീ ജിതേംദ്രിയഃ |

ആഭീരദ്ഭിരവാപ്നോതു പുത്രപൌത്രോചിതാം ക്രിയാമ് |

vaiyāghrapādagotrāya sāṃkṛtyapravarāya ca |
gaṃgāputrāya bhīṣmāya ājanmabrahmacāriṇe |
aputrāya jalaṃ dadyāṃ namo bhīṣmāya varmaṇe |
bhīṣmaḥ śāṃtanavo vīraḥ satyavādī jiteṃdriyaḥ |
ābhīradbhiravāpnotu putrapautrocitāṃ kriyām |

(Bheeshmaaya Namaha - Bheeshmam Tharpayaami)

Arghya Manthra

वस्नामवताराय शांतनोरात्मजाय च ।

अर्घ्यंददाभम भीष्माय अबालब्रह्मचाररणे।

ವಸೂನಾಮವತಾರಾಯ ಶಂತನೋರಾತ್ಮಜಾಯ ಚ |

ಅರ್ಘ್ಯಂ ದದಾಮಿ ಭೀಷ್ಮಾಯ ಅಬಾಲಬ್ರಹ್ಮಚಾರಿಣೇ |

వసూనామవతారాయ శంతనోరాత్మజాయ చ |

అర్ఘ్యం దదామి భీష్మాయ అబాలబ్రహ్మచారిణే |

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vasūnāmavatārāya śaṃtanorātmajāya ca |
arghyaṃ dadāmi bhīṣmāya abālabrahmacāriṇe |

(Gangaputhraaya Bheeshmaaya Idamarghyam)

All dvijas irrespective of whether father is alive or not should give tharpana and arghya to Bheeshmacharya.

Where father is not alive, one should give Thila tharpana with black thila seeds by reciting the above manthra with Yagnopaveetham in apasavya position.

Where the father is alive it should be performed in Savya position with rice.

This is stated as Nitya Karma to be performed by all.

Apart from giving Tharpana and Arghya to Bheeshma, one can also recite Sri Vishnu SahasraNama Stothra in honour of its composer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bhishmacharya served God throughout his life. However, at the last moment of his death, he lost the memory of God.

The Bhagavad Gita says that if one remembers God at the end of one's life, one can go near God. One should not remain indifferent, believing this and thinking that it is enough to remember God at the end of one's life and be at ease.

Remembering God at the end of one's life is not easy. Even great souls like Bhishma could not do it.

Therefore, only if our entire life is sattvic can we remember God at the end.

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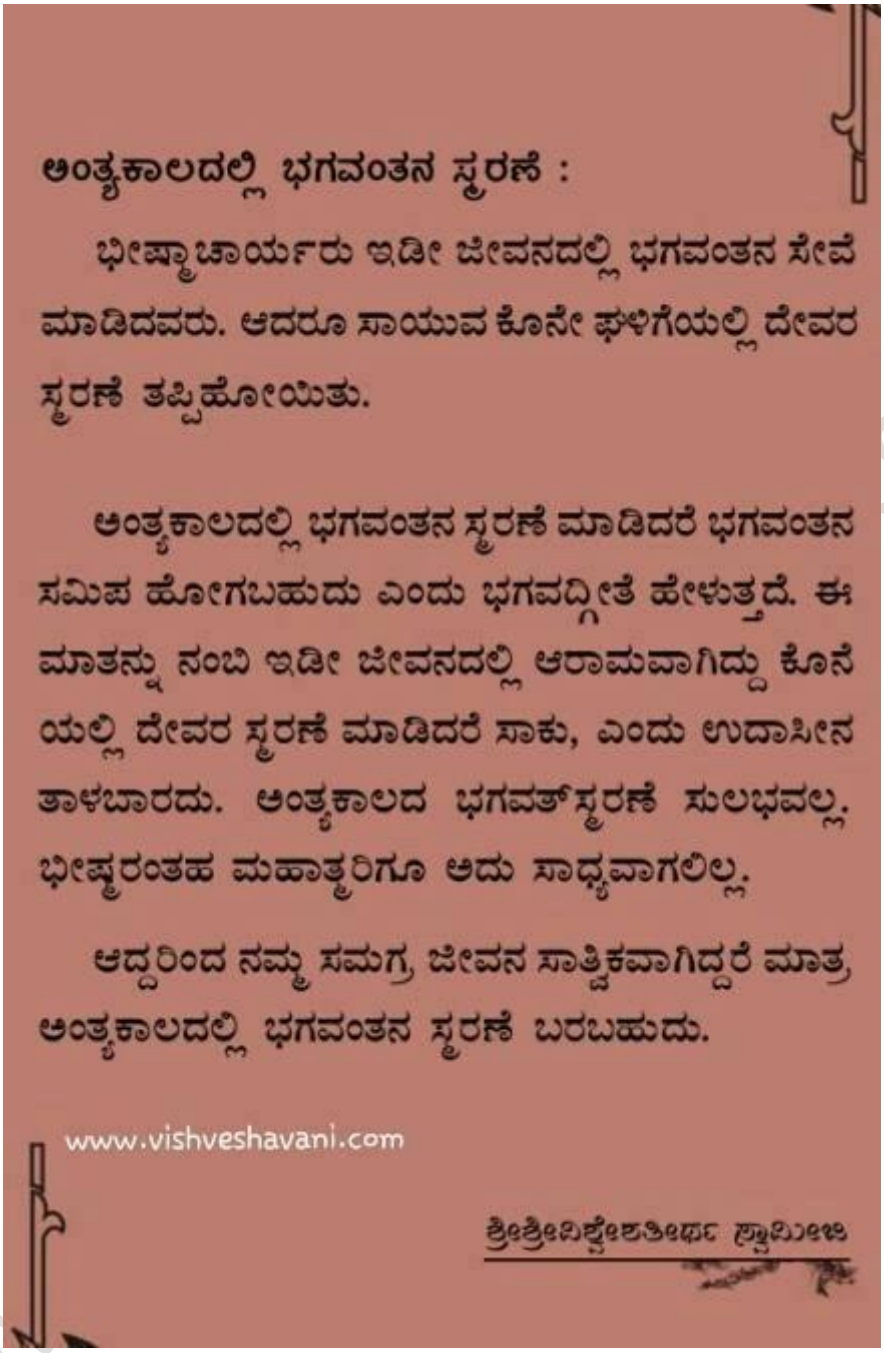

It was Lord Sri Krishna who gave prerana to DharmaRaja to get counseled from Bheeshmacharya and simultaneously gave prerana to Bheeshmacharya, made him answer DharmaRaja and recite Sri Vishnu Sahasranama Stothra by standing as his antaryaami.

Message to be carried is...

(1) "saMtataM chiMtayE~naMtaM aMtakAIE vishEShataH"
[Always, sarvakaala sarvavastha, in every condition, contemplate, think, focus...on
whom? ANANTHA the Bhagavantha especially
during Antakaala (at the time of/in anticipation of death)
says Sri MadhvaAcharya in DwadasaStotra]

(2) ananyaAshchintayanto maAm yE janaaHaa paryupaAsate | tEshaAm nityaAbhiyuktaAnaam yogakshEmam vahaAmyaHam ||
(Bhagawadgita 9th Canto sloka # 22)

[Ananya means 'no' anya, single minded devotion (emphasis on Ananya Bhakti), exclusive devotion/faith towards
the Supreme God who is > Hari Sarvottama;

For such people the Supreme God the one and the only Reality, the One Who has
saved Ambarish, Draupadi, Gajendra, Prahlad etc. etc... is giving an assurance, openly proclaiming that, He would take care of their welfare (Yoga/Kshema);

In a supreme spiritual sense
ultimate Yogakshema (welfare/wellbeing) for an individual (soul) is liberation which Lord Sri Krishna assures;]

Bheeshmacharya was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Sri Krishna.

Message to be carried is for a true devotee/saadhaka, even if he forgets Bhagawad smarana during avasana (at the time of death) Bhagavantha will not leave his hand and will give required prerarana to do so. This is what happened in case of Bheeshmacharya. Through him Lord Sri Krishna is giving these messages to the world.

Sri KrishnaArpanamasthu
naham karta harih karta

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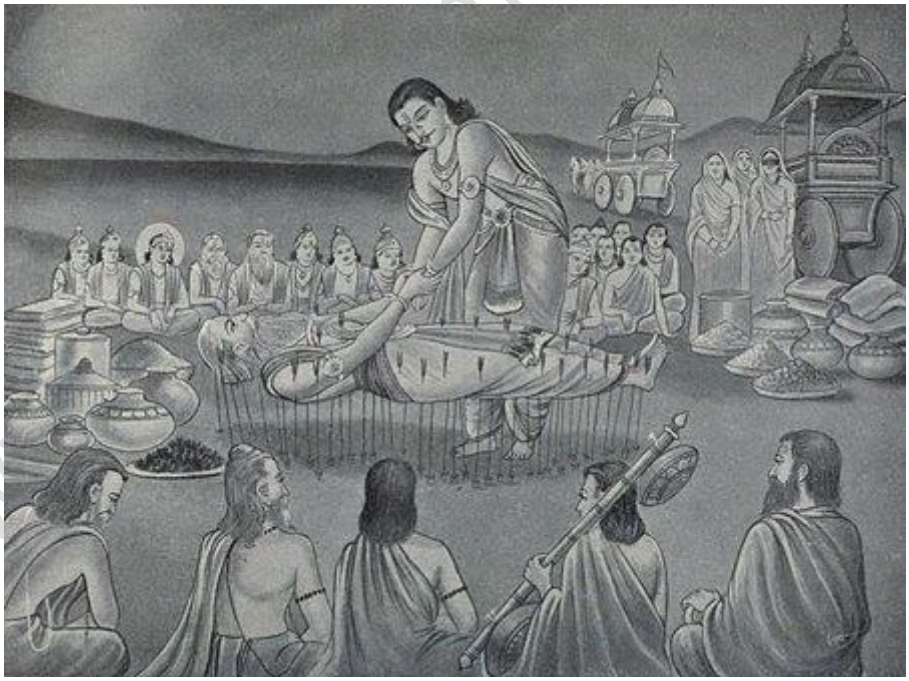

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